

Commissioners Present: Joseph M Prior Chairman, Paul C. DeMaio Vice Chairman, Clerk Marshall L. Harris

Employees Present: Superintendent: Craig W. Jalbert; Secretary: Dale Barnes-Johnson

Open the Meeting: The meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m.

Accept the Meeting Minutes: Marty made a motion to accept the meeting minutes of February 11, 2021. Joe seconded and it was unanimously voted.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS:

FY2022 Budget ~ Dale and Craig have prepared a preliminary budget for Commission discussion.

Water operating line-item increases were made to Water Analysis (+\$4,000) to cover increased mandatory testing (PFAS in the Fall) and Hired Equipment (+\$4,000) resulting in a +\$8,000 operating expense variance from prior FY2021. Salary line items include contractual increases, but the loss of a full time employee and addition of a part time clerk results in a -\$13,105 salary variance. The total water budget variance from FY2021 -\$5,105 and indirect costs decreased by -\$410.

Sewer operating increases include a new Sewer Manhole Maintenance line item (+\$15,000) to go towards Chapter 90 street repaving projects, all other operating line items remain the same. The Highway Department is being proactive and working with Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to develop a pavement management plan, this reoccurring line item will be used for sewer manhole frame & cover replacements and adjustments not covered by Chapter 90. Minimal contractual salary increases and the loss of a full time employee and the addition of a part time clerk results in a -\$7,291 salary variance. The total sewer budget variance for FY2021 +\$7,709 and indirect costs increased by \$1,831.

There is no increase to the preliminary Water Rate proposal. The FY2022 debt payment decreased by -\$132.37 based on the number of active water account fluctuations, the \$19.90/Qtr Water Debt Service Fee will be decreased to \$19.85/Qtr.

There is no increase to the preliminary Sewer Rate proposal, by adding Holistic to our High-End Usage (EDU's) above the Min. the estimated billable EDU's increased by 111. FY2022 debt payment decreased by -\$825 the \$8.83/Qtr Sewer Debt Service Fee will be decreased to \$8.64/Qtr.

The Commission agreed to finalize the budget and vote on rates at a future meeting. Dale will submit the budget via ClearGov.

DEP Sanitary Survey ~ the final report was received with no surprises; the response form has been sent and the report added to our website.

USA Central Alarm Issues ~ We have been experiencing an intermittent problem with our alarm notification service. When USA CA becomes overwhelmed with alarm calls their staff cannot respond with notification protocols fast enough to keep up so they must prioritize the notifications in order of critical importance. This results in a delay of us receiving notification because when Ed Pelland originally set up our accounts all alarms were programmed as lower priority trouble signals. Ed Jr. has since corrected the problem by reprogramming all alarms to the higher critical priority. Ed Jr. has assured Craig that he and his brother John will continue to provide our service in the near term due to Ed Sr's illness. In the long term, just in case, Craig is getting pricing from alternative vendors. Chicopee Electronics visited Tuesday to test a cellular system, unfortunately not a good fit in Monson yet.

America's Water Infrastructure Act (AWIA) & Risk and Resilience Assessment (R&RA) Project ongoing – another class is scheduled for March 31; Assessment due June 30, 2021.

Water Management Act (WMA) ~ MassDEP has begun the process of promulgating regulations that would add conservation restrictions to our existing water withdrawal registration. These proposed restrictions are quite severe and triggered by drought declarations from the office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. They are not based on the usual local triggers (streamflow, well levels) that a typical water permit holder is required to follow. In fact these proposed restrictions will only apply to registrants, conveniently disregarding permittees, private well owners and water systems connected to the Mass Water Resource Authority (MWRA) (Quabbin). If the proposed regulations become enacted registered only water systems like us would be forced to restrict and then ban all non-essential water use (lawn watering, car washing). There is an old bill on the State House docket 2345 that would prevent this but it's quite old, Craig doesn't think it will move forward. Back in 2000, the Town adopted a Water Use Restriction Bylaw and used the model bylaw from DEP at that time, evidently DEP's model bylaw was updated in 2018. According to the language in our bylaw, the Town, through its Board of Water & Sewer Commissioners, may impose restrictions if a water supply emergency exists. The Commission presently does not have the authority to enact restrictions for a drought declaration; this would require a Town Meeting vote to change the bylaw for that purpose.

Craig sent Jennifer Wolowicz Temporary Town Administrator information about the WMA and DEP proposing to condition our registration, along with House Docket 2345 that would prevent this from happening to see if she thought the Selectmen would be in favor of sending a letter to Rep. Ashe and Senator Gobi in support. Craig included a fact sheet he prepared regarding Monson's water situation which demonstrates our robust supply and excellent management history.

The financial impact of the proposed mandatory restrictions would leave us with a significant revenue loss, approximately 13 MG / \$72,000 and would require an increase of \$0.95/1000 gal to offset this loss.

Department Activity

- ~ Leak at 154 Main Street repaired.
- ~ Break on Mechanic & Mill was repaired.
- ~ Leak at 15 Hampden Ave was addressed.
- ~ Sewer issue at 8 Main St., the new owner called to report she had a sewer back up. According to the drawing we have on file the sewer ran out the back of the house into a tank with an ejector pump. Evidently, during the house renovation the power to the ejector pump was removed and then during a subsequent home inspection the owner was advised to crush the tank. No one contacted us before any of these actions were taken. Reconnection options were explained to her and were completed 2/22/2021.
- ~ Brad Small performed parco maintenance.
- ~ Tom and Forris have been working on easement fallen trees and brush around stations.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting was scheduled in the future.

ADJOURN: A motion was made by Paul and seconded by Marty to adjourn at 4:30 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Marshall L. Harris, Clerk
cc: Selectmen